

DECEMBER 1959

The Reformed Journal

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The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT & OPINION

Volume IX

No. 11

DECEMBER 1959

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HENRY STOB, HARRY R. BOER, JAMES DAANE
LESTER DEKOSTER, GEORGE STOB

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Christmas Party

by Calvin Seerveld

YOU remember how it all started, the first announcement of Christ's birth day:

Once upon a time when Quirinius was governor of Syria, there were some shepherds out in the fields around Bethlehem in Judea keeping the watches through the night for their flocks. Unexpectedly an angel of the Lord stood over them and glory of the Lord shone all around them, and they were deathly afraid. Don't be afraid, said the angel to them. Good news! Great joy to the world! Today in the city of David is born to you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord! And suddenly there was with the angel an enormous army of angels praising God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth to men of good will!" Then the angels went away.

AS soon as the devils heard this divine news broadcast, I imagine they became damnably infuriated. They were not enjoying themselves on earth at all, and here comes more bad news: Joy to the world. Peace!

So the devils got busy and spread the word around (and are still busy rumoring it today): That was no news broadcast. That was a divine commercial advertising God's latest product. It was heavenly all right, simply divine. How sweet the name of Jesus sounded in that angelic choir. Beautiful angels. Let's hope God makes it an annual affair — I just love good music.

An insidious attack — to turn attention away from the message to the music separated and sentimentalized, to praise God's angels down to choir boys. The fact of the matter is this: those angels were not the white-robed cherubs of our Christmas cards. Those angels were war veterans of the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian and many more campaigns, mighty men who wielded fiery swords and had killed thousands and thousands of enemy soldiers in one night. They were not out for a lark in the dark to sing a delightful carol or two. Their song came in the dead of night, a tremendous Alleluia of good news. "Praise God the King! who tonight has changed history as he said he would."

THE jealous devils who did not get to sing in that choir of long ago did one other thing. Their arch-composer got together his best musicians to write

a better song, and the result is that well-known chorus popular even today:

*Glory to Christmas in the highest.
And on earth, peace and good will to men.*

Devilishly clever. Satan is a master of simulation. It takes a Bible-sensitive ear to hear the difference. "Glory to God in the highest"; "Glory to Christmas in the highest." If anyone wants to know what secularization means, here it is: the heart of the matter gets lost and the hollow shell is celebrated. But God knows about the satanic plagiary and He has plans. As St. Paul ominously suggests: the next time God sends His mighty angels out on choir tour it will be with trumpet accompaniment, and that performance will be too terrible for sentimentalization and shall put an end to all worldly parodies.

What is the point? That no merry Christmas was celebrated? No, the point is this: there is more than one song in the air; know which song you are singing; and if it be *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, find out whether it be a confession of the heart or just something that melts into the background music of seasonal greetings.

God hates sham and God hates having other gods beside Him — which does not mean that God hates celebrations. That is precisely what we have been waiting for in the Advent, the big birthday party where God Himself gives out the presents to whoever comes, the very presents His angels announced long ago: the Joy of safety, of restoration to a Loved One; the Peace from fear that passes all understanding because it is permanent in Him.

LET us interrupt our work briefly then, take a vacation as the shepherds did to go to Bethlehem for a rest — true parties are restful — let us go then, you and I, with a grateful laugh, singing in Spirit and in Truth, to commemorate the birth of Christ our King whom God's angels proclaimed. Glory be to God in the highest!

*Eternal Holy Spirit,
Save us from sham and hollowness;
Help us to know what we are singing and why,
for Jesus' sake and for the glory of God,
Amen.*

Christmas in Poetry and Song

Introduced by Steve J. Vander Weele

THE editors of the *Reformed Journal* thought it appropriate to make available to its readers a representative selection of the legacy of Christmas verse and song not available in our hymnals. As I worked on this compilation, at their request, it soon became apparent that virtually all Christmas verse has been written to be sung. There are, to be sure, some poems which cannot be so adapted, such as Richard Crashaw's "The Nativity," Milton's ode "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," Alexander Pope's "The Messiah," and T. S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" — all interesting, incidentally, in their own way. But Christmas has always been, and still ought to be, a time of singing.

Most of the selections which follow are carols. Most of them were written in the period between 1400 to 1650. These carols have a number of things in common. For one thing, they were often written by lay people impatient, it seems, with the formal liturgy of the Church. They were, moreover, written in the vernacular languages, although sometimes a phrase or a refrain show their Latin origins. Again, they often reflect that wholeness of consciousness that prevailed when the sacred and the secular were still of a piece. Then, too, they are joyous, even on solemn themes. They have, finally, the integrity of folk songs, and although they often show faults of grammar, logic, and prosody, they are honest expressions of their era and their people.

Here, then, are some carols, and some poems, on various phases of the Incarnation, which have been sung or recited by people in times past and present. The spelling of some of them has been modernized, and other adaptations have been made to render them intelligible to us. The carols are from *The Oxford Book of Carols*, ed. Percy Dearmer, R. Vaughan Williams, Martin Shaw (Oxford University Press, 1956), and the other selections from *The Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, ed. Lord David Cecil (Oxford University Press, 1940).

A carol about the Annunciation. Melody and words of "De Boodschap van Maria," translated from the Dutch.

THE MESSAGE

A message came to a maiden young;
The angel stood beside her,
In shining robes and with golden tongue,
He told what should betide her:
The maid was lost in wonder —
Her world was rent asunder —
Ah! how could she
Christ's mother be
By God's most high decree!

No greater news could a messenger bring:
For 'twas from that young mother

He came, who walked on the earth as a king,
And yet was all men's brother:
His truth has spread like leaven,
'Twill marry earth to heaven,
Till all agree
In charity
To dwell from sea to sea.

He came, God's Word to the world here below;
And round him there did gather
A band who found that this Teacher to know
Was e'en to know the Father:
He healed the sick who sought him,
Forgave the foes who fought him;
Beside the Sea
Of Galilee
He set the nations free.

From Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," 1629.

INVOCATION

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heav'n's eternal King,
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.
That glorious form, that light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heav'n's high council-table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside; and here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Say Heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,
To welcome him to this his new abode;
Now while the Heav'n by the sun's team untrod
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?
See how from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet:
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode.
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first, thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the Angel Quire,
From out his secret altar touch'd with hallow'd fire.

A traditional English carol, referring to Christ's coming in the fullness of time.

INFINITE LIGHT

The greatness of God in his love has been shown,
The light of his life on the Nations is thrown;
And that which the Jews and the Greeks did divine
Is come in the fullness of Jesus to shine:

The Light of the World in the darkness has shone,
And grows in our sight as the ages flow on.

He rolls the grim darkness and sorrow away
And brings all our fears to the light of the day;
The idols are fallen of anger and blood,
And God is revealed as the loving and good:

And, though we have sinned like the Prodigal Son,
His love to our succour and welcome will run:
His gospel of pardon, of love and accord,
Will master oppression and shatter the sword:

The Light of the World is more clear to our sight
As errors disperse and men see him aright:
In lands long in shadow, his Churches arise
And blaze for their neighbours the Way of the Wise.

A paraphrase of a Welsh carol.

WELSH CAROL

Awake were they only, those shepherds so lonely,
On guard in that silence profound:
When colour had faded, when night-time had shaded
Their senses from sight and from sound,
Lo, then broke a wonder, then drifted asunder
The veils from the splendour of God,
When light from the Holy came down to the lowly,
And heaven to the earth that they trod.

May light now enfold us, O Lord, for behold us
Like shepherds, from tumult withdrawn,
Nor hearing, nor seeing, all other care fleeing,
We wait the ineffable dawn.
O spirit all-knowing, thou source overflowing,
O move in the darkness around,
That sight may be in us, true hearing to win us
Glad tidings where Christ may be found.

A translation by K. E. Roberts of a Welsh carol.

POVERTY

All poor men and humble,
All lame men who stumble,
Come haste ye, nor feel ye afraid;
For Jesus, our treasure,
With love past all measure,
In lowly poor manger was laid.

Though wise men who found him
Laid rich gifts around him,
Yet oxen they gave him their hay:
And Jesus in beauty
Accepted their duty;
Contented in manger he lay.

Then haste we to show him
The praises we owe him;
Our service he ne'er can despise:
Whose love still is able
To show us that stable
Where softly in manger he lies.

A sonnet on the wise men, by Nathaniel Wanley, 17th century.

ROYAL PRESENTS

The offerings of the Eastern kings of old
Unto our lord were incense, myrrh and gold;
Incense because a God; gold as a king;
And myrrh as to a dying man they bring.
Instead of incense (Blessed Lord) if we
Can send a sigh or fervent prayer to thee,
Instead of myrrh if we can but provide
Tears that from penitential eyes do slide,
And though we have no gold, if for our part
We can present thee with a broken heart,
Thou wilt accept: and say those Eastern kings
Did not present thee with more precious things.

A nineteenth-century carol about the wise men, translated from the German.

THE KINGS

Three Kings from Persian lands afar
To Jordan follow the pointing star:
And this the quest of the travellers three,
Where the new born King of the Jews may be.
Full royal gifts they bear for the King;
Gold, incense, myrrh are their offering.

The star shines out with a steadfast ray;
The Kings to Bethlehem make their way,
And there in worship they bend the knee,
As Mary's child in her lap they see;
Their royal gifts they show to the King,
Gold, incense, myrrh are their offering.

Thou child of man—lo, to Bethlehem
The Kings are travelling—travel with them!
The star of mercy, the star of grace,
Shall lead thy heart to its resting place.
Gold, incense, myrrh thou canst not bring;
Offer thy heart to the infant King,
Offer thy heart!

On Becoming a Man

by Hugh A. Koops

I must be growing older. Formerly my youth recoiled at the phrase, "I remember when. . . ." I thought it a threat to the vitality of my generation, a subtle blow beneath the belt. But I must be growing older, for my life has taken on a "past." I, too, remember when. . . .

I grew up on the farm. It was a happy life, though I did not always think so then, and might not even think so now — on the farm. The big day on the farm was the day when the threshing rig would come. One would look forward to that day with anxiety and anticipation; anxiety borne by the constant threat of sudden rain postponing the harvest, and anticipation borne by the hope that this year's crop might be better than last year's, and perhaps even better than the neighbors'.

Threshing was always the important day for the boy on the farm. Dad, of course, was busy giving instructions to the crew. Like the New Testament centurion, he would send some here, to haul in the grain, and some there, to carry it away. But a boy's responsibility on the home farm was somehow even greater. For even before the rig could be set up, he had to climb the machine and swing the unwieldy blower into place. Everyone had to wait for the man who would steer the blower, and on our farm this was my responsibility. Whatever doubts I might have had before or since, on the day we threshed I was a *man*.

Steering the blower was dirty work. The "fresh country air" we read about today was unknown the day we threshed. But I would tie a large red handkerchief over my face and peer with tired and dust-filled eyes through the dusty darkness of the barn, trying to reach the furthest corners with the stream of straw. There were three ropes to pull: one directing the straw to the right, another directing it to the left, and one pulling back the blower-cap. And there were three wheels to turn: one to swing, one to lift, and another to lengthen the blower pipe. The constant throbbing of the big machine and the constant pressure on the ropes made hard work for a boy. But there was always a moment of rest, and after every load I made it my happy chore to check the counter, and see how many bushels had been threshed. The driver of the team would wait until my signal assured him his last load had been larger than the first.

But the big event of every threshing day was the noonday meal. A dozen men and more would

gather around the stretching table in the huge farm kitchen. I was dirtier than they all, but they would wait for me to clean up and come to the table before saying grace. For I was part of the crew. I could see the jealousy in my younger brother's eyes, but he would have to wait, with mother and my sisters, until the *men* were through. And we took our time, eating and drinking, joking and passing the plate for more. Some men may remember their first pair of long pants, but on the farm the day one joined the threshing-crew, that day a boy became a man.

WITH the coming of the combine, it became more and more difficult to find enough men to make up a crew. No longer were the crews composed of only neighbors helping each other. Every year another neighbor or two would excuse himself from threshing duties with the half-ashamed excuse, "I'm trying the combine this year." He never dared to look one in the face when saying it, and always pretended to be experimenting. Few wanted to believe that threshing days were over. But an era was passing, and the threshing season no longer remained the social event of a farmer's summer calendar.

Each year we had to look further for threshing help. The time came when there simply were not enough neighbors to go around, and we had to hire migrant workers. In our community there were many Mexican summer laborers who would come from the south each year to work in the pickle patches. Pitching bundles of grain was recreation after several days of picking pickles. So these Mexicans would gladly help us. They were husky, hearty, happy men. Many had never worked with pitchforks before but, tossing bundles with their hands, they could soon tire even the most experienced farmer. Even thistles could not halt their laughter, and the secrets of the Spanish tongue added a touch of romance to the work of the day.

On the day we expected the threshers to come, my brother would wait in front of the house to let us know when he could see the dark green Huber tractor coming through the village. Then we would ride with Dad to the neighboring pickle fields and ferry the Mexicans from their summer shanties to our farm. It was on one of these short trips that I received the biggest surprise of my

short life. For one of these pickers called a dirty and dusty comrade, "Jesus."

Since then I have discovered that this is not an unusual name among Spanish-speaking peoples. But at the time I took it as a sure indication of irreverence. This was "the name that is above every name." I could picture Jesus in a flowing maroon robe seated among little children. But I could not see Jesus sitting with the threshers, and surely not in faded denim with fingers black from picking pickles. What mockery was this, I thought. Only the fact that they were Catholic (for Catholics were hardly considered Christian in our predominantly Protestant community) and Mexican could explain this blasphemy. A chill went through me when I heard the name, and I wondered whether God would punish such disrespect with fire from heaven.

THROUGHOUT that day I wondered as I watched that man. It was hard to see Jesus covered with dust and soaked with sweat. It hurt to see Jesus laughing and working, pitching bundles and carrying sacks of grain. Here, on the day that I was being considered a man, I found myself considering Jesus as a man. Together we were threshing wheat and having lunch. Jesus was a man, as I was a man. But *my* Jesus was the Son of God!

And then, the years of Sunday school and catechism reminded me of what I needed to know. To be sure, Jesus was the Son of God. But He was also the Son of Man. He was divine, but He was human as well. Jesus was not ashamed, as I had been, of sweat and dust. His sweat had been as drops of blood, and His dust had been wiped away by a maiden's hair. His disciples had threshed grain in their hands while walking through the fields, and Jesus had defended them. I had not wanted to take Jesus with me when I became a man. But Jesus could not be kept away.

I had heard the Christmas story many times. Now I understood the surprise of the shepherds in the field, and the pondering of Mary as she kept these secrets in her heart. I had been surprised at the irreverence of Jesus; now I knew that Christmas was the day of God's irreverence. I knew the joy of having a dirty and a dusty God, a God who was not ashamed to become a man. My God had hallowed the dust of a manger and the straw of a stable. In church I had heard the word "incarnation" many times. But a Mexican who could not speak my language had taught me theology. I remembered the chill when first I heard the name of "Jesus." It was the chill, the thrill, of Christmas.

Above the roar of the tractor and the rumble of the rig I heard the herald angels sing.

Christmas Greetings

Strengthen ye the weak hands,
And confirm the feeble knees.
Say to them that are of a fearful heart,
Be strong, fear not:
Behold, your God will come with vengeance,
Even God with a recompence;
He will come and save you.
Every valley shall be exalted,
And every mountain and hill shall be made low:
And the crooked shall be made straight,
And the rough places plain:
And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together:
For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand,
And his arm shall rule for him:
Behold, his reward is with him,
And his work before him.

I, even I, am the Lord;
And beside me there is no saviour.

Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth;
And break forth into singing, O mountains;
For the Lord hath comforted his people,
And will have mercy upon his afflicted.

Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

The Editors and Publisher of the Journal take this occasion to express the wish and prayer that all spiritual blessings in our Lord Jesus Christ may be yours in this hallowed season and in the days of the coming year.

We Salute

THE Presidents of Calvin College and Seminary have just announced that, after the completion of the Seminary building, the next building to arise on the Knollcrest Campus will be the College and Seminary Library, in which will be housed—if plans and hopes are realized—a comprehensive collection of Calviniana.

We applaud this decision, not only for its own intrinsic vision, but because we know that it was motivated in part by the growing conception, in whose development the publisher of this Journal played a significant role, of making the Knollcrest Campus a center of Calvinistic studies for America and for the world.

The readers of *The Reformed Journal* need not be told of the monumental influence John Calvin has exerted, and still exerts, upon the history of the world. Nor will they be ignorant of the fact that Calvinism has entered upon a veritable renaissance since 1900 because it offers a basic and fundamental challenge to secularism, Communism, and the mind of modernity.

The possibility, then, that a collection of all books and materials by and about Calvin, and Calvinism, can be accumulated in the new Calvin Library exhilarates, excites, and sets us to dreaming big dreams. From such resources, as from a dynamo, students and studies may go forth; to such resources, as to a magnet, scholars may be attracted. From everywhere students and scholars will come, to everywhere they will return, empowered and enriched by the treasures made available to them in one Library under two faculties.

But is such a collection possible? Can the books be obtained? housed? paid for?

Fifty years ago such a dream as this would have faded away before the practical problems of a monumental building, rare and costly and unobtainable books, and the necessity of massive endowment. Those were the days, too, when (as you will remember) it was a kind of trick to print the Lord's Prayer on the head of a pin. But the technique that was then a novelty has now been put in the service of research. The camera now snaps, with precise accuracy, page after page of *any* volume *anywhere*, storing on microfilm the treasures of the libraries of the world. Condensed upon one roll of film 35 millimeters wide, and one hundred feet long, are hundreds of pages; and, slipped into the film reader, the copy flashes upon the screen an enlarged, accurate, precise reproduction of the original.

No longer is it necessary to buy at excessive prices rare volumes and precious documents. These are accessible by filming, and belong now to all the world of scholarship.

Whole libraries can now occupy small rooms. At St. Louis University, for example, in a room hardly larger than your living room, (and only along one wall of it, at that) are stored in thirteen cabinets, shoulder-high, 11,000,000 filmed pages of Vatican Library manuscripts. What might Calvin College and Seminary do with half that quantity of volumes dealing with our roots and history?

And if the cost of housing film is not prohibitive, nor is that of obtaining it. The charge will vary somewhat with the library and with the country where that library is located. The total cost of the Vatican film collection was less than three cents per page. And, when desired, by a new process, printed copies of these pages, bound into book format, can be made for about three-and-one-half cents a page, while additional microfilm copies can be run at about one-sixth cent per page, and sold to offset the initial investment.

In short, the cost of a substantial collection on film is, though a real item in budget calculation, by no means prohibitive. And other forms of micro-production, on 3x5 or 6x9 cards, are undergoing progressive development.

We live at the juncture in history when the stream of Calvinist thought and influence can be imprinted upon film, stored in a small reservoir, and guided in its ever expanding flow by those who have the vision, in God's providence, to unite the gifts of His common, scientific endowments with the gifts of His special grace.

The Editors of *The Reformed Journal* hail this project, now identified as the Heritage Hall Collection, as the kind of big, forward-looking enterprise which promises to unite us all in one continuing effort at making the precious heritage which we all confess fruitful world-wide in our time and for all time. By thus serving others, we will serve ourselves. Caught up in this project shoulder-to-shoulder, the Christian Reformed Church enters upon its second centennial with a mission, a purpose, a vision which eclipses as it embodies all the dreams of our first one hundred years.

To the realization of this goal the *Journal* pledges its support, its pages, and our prayers.

—THE EDITORS

Literature in the Space Age*

by Clarence De Graaf

WHEN the smoke lifted over the radioactive ashes of Hiroshima and left 200,000 dead, on that day, August 6, 1945, the conscience of mankind was shocked into attention. Here was the acme of scientific progress, a death-dealing weapon that could annihilate mankind. Since then the atomic bomb has been replaced by the more deadly H bomb, the H bomb by the nuclear missile, the missile by "who knows what." Today man is confronted with the anomaly of extending his frontiers to the moon and yet being full of fear because he has no place to hide. In a world of such power there can be no security, for the smallest nation can trigger a chain reaction that will destroy us all.

Norman Cousins, the editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, wrote an editorial in the wake of the bomb in which he compared the vaunted glories of man with the destructiveness of his scientific tools. He concluded that man is now engaged in a mad race with change in order to make the decisions that may assure his survival. The first of these decisions must be for a world government in place of the jealous defense of sovereignty and nationalism. Man can adapt to a new world, but will he be able to adapt fast enough? *Life* magazine at the same time ran an editorial quoting at length from Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound," and it compared the new source of energy to the titan's secret of how he had wrested fire from the gods. Now that the gods had given up their secret of atomic energy, would man be able to defy omnipotent power, to transform life into hope and forgiveness, joy and wisdom?

FOR such a world, the writer as artist must act as an interpreter. Where science can provide mankind with an ever changing body of fact about the expanding universe, we must rely on the artist to understand the fundamental unity between creation and the creature. He must bring together a unity out of disparity, a philosophy out of a chaos of new findings. This has always been the function of the artist. The search for happiness has always come into conflict with an unresponsive environment. The Greeks speculated on the nature of the universe to reduce it to a reasonable, intelligible

cosmos. They already realized that to understand themselves they had to explain the universe. Democritus with his atoms is not too different from Heisenberg with his electrons. Though some of their poets set up mind as ultimate reality, they were never far away from the form of things as they saw them in the observable universe.

We think of the Renaissance as the age in which science was liberated from the narrow dogmatism of the church. Francis Bacon built his utopia for the new-found science on the fabulous island of the New Atlantis, because his new learning could not be accommodated in the traditional patterns of living. The new humanism was a rediscovery of the ancient classical learning and the new discovery of an orderly physical universe. When the world of rationalism was too cold for the artist, he gave way to his feeling and fancy in the grandeur of the drama, or the epic.

In the age of Enlightenment the natural laws, as Newton explained them, gave man a feeling of mastery, since it was an orderly, God-directed universe that could be translated into reason and mathematics. Even when the Romantics questioned the nature of the universe and while the French Revolutionists tried to create a new environment for man, the scientists and the technologists moved forward in an uninterrupted advance. The comforts produced by the nineteenth-century scientist were undergirded with a dream of social progress based on Darwin's *Origin of Species*. The social sciences of the nineteenth century came to the defense of man, if he still had doubts about his own position in a reasonable world. God was at first given the honorable position of the clock-maker, but with the continued growth of science He was bowed out of the universe or relegated to the realm of the myth. The men of Western society remained optimistic because they thought, having gotten rid of God, they also were rid of the devil, and evil was only a form of immaturity or a lack of education.

It is against this onward march of science that we must see the impact made by the dropping of the atom bomb. It is in this intellectual climate that we must examine the position of the artist. What contribution can literature make to the impasse in which modern man finds himself? What are the possibilities of finding meaning for the individual in an overwhelming world of accumulated fact?

* Following upon this article there will appear in successive issues of the *Journal* trenchant accounts of Poetry, the Novel, and The Drama in the Space Age, written by members of the Hope College English Department. Appearing next month will be "Spiritual Frontiers in the Contemporary Novel."

OUR sudden awareness of moral conscience in the use of atomic energy was a repercussion from Hiroshima but now, even worse, the easy confidence in our technological superiority is rudely shocked by the successful launching first of the Russian Sputnik and now a satellite to the moon. We are aware that we have been outdone by an unfriendly rival and that as a result of technological inferiority we have lost much prestige among the smaller nations. Who will restore our confidence?

In an attempt to solve this impasse we are likely to by-pass the literary figures, to turn first to the problem-solving sociologists and psychologists. These are the men who have learned in the last century to pose as the wise men because they have the scientific method to establish truth. To these men are given the data which they hope will provide salvation, a salvation resting upon happy correlation of the facts of the universe and the facts of the individual. The control of nature and the direction of society will be left in their hands. In contrast, when the artist does speak he may not be heard because he will speak with a great faith not predicated upon the data of scientific experimentation. If the artist is concerned with the preservation and promotion of truth, it will be with the whole unity of man, of God and the universe, and many will readily dismiss this as so much metaphysical speculation.

Robert A. Milliken, the physicist, in an appraisal of the limitations of literature and art in a world of science, points at the irresponsible artist who is all too often regarded as the only readable interpreter of our day.

"... To-day literature is infested here and there with unbridled license, with emotional, destructive, over-sexed, neurotic influences, the product of men who are either incompetent to think anything through to its consequences, or else who belong to that not inconsiderable group who protest that they are not in the least interested in social consequences anyway, men who, in their own words, are merely desirous of expressing themselves. . . ."

If we allow the social planners to redistribute nuclear energy and political power in such a way as to provide a modicum of peace in a hazardous world, what is there for the literary artist to do in this brave new world? He may spend his time reminiscing over the "good old days that used to be," when all aspects of life were more familiar to him and he felt comfortable in the distribution of authority. Or he may spend his energies as a critic denouncing the confusion and dislocations that result when man must adapt rapidly to great change. Or he may address himself to the challenge of the new and try to interpret the new in

terms of what was good in the old in order that he may preserve spiritual values in a changing environment. It is this last responsibility that we would like to find in the poets, the dramatists and the novelists of our day.

PERMIT me in closing to indicate a few areas in which the impact of new knowledge has disturbed the old patterns for the good life to such extent that we are looking for men of vision to bring us out of our wilderness. We may ask, now that we cannot return to the fleshpots of Egypt, nor be content with forty years of wilderness diet, Where will we find the Joshuas that shall lead us into the promised land?

It seems to me we need artists who can present the meaning of individuality in a world that is geared more and more to the masses. The mass media of communication are conditioning the spirit of man to an ever growing automatic response-mechanism. What will be the effect of new techniques of living in a highly industrial, competitive society if the free spirit, so much a part of man, must be surrendered? Man needs an ever increasing joy and purposefulness in his work while serving in communal activity. He needs an ever growing affection for his environment to relieve the suspicion he has of the frankenstein whom he serves.

We need a better understanding of the place of sex in the life of the family and the home. Instead of a literature that makes promiscuity an escape from boredom, we need deeper insight into the love that gives women emancipation through the sacrifices demanded of her in the family. The selfishness of self-fulfillment shall have to make room for Christian self-denial. The anxieties of the world will have to be reduced by a few securities or we shall all end up in complexes of neuroticism. The brutalities that are practiced in our age, the flagrant abuse of power, the ruthless destruction of life will have to yield before the tenderness of suffering, the rights of the weak, and the sweetness of love.

We need a greater sense of destiny in a space-controlled world. The battle is not necessarily to the strong. Nations and individuals share in the mandate to exercise dominion over this world, but that does not mean that God abdicates His throne. Toynbee can trace for us the rise and fall of nations. Where do we stand in the scale of integrity, justice, and community? We talk glibly about survival in superior bomb shelters, but is there an inevitable course in human history that is not directed by the social planners? These are only a few of the problems the artist must consider, if he would restore a unity out of our present chaos.

A Theological Note on the Incarnation

by Leonard Verduin

AT this time of the year our thoughts move out to the mystery of the Incarnation, the greatest mystery of all the Christian mysteries. That there is mystery here is not strange; for we stand here at the point where the eternal and the temporal join hands. This juncture of time-bound and not-time-bound brings large problems for all who think thereon; and these problems become immeasurably greater when it is recalled that in this juncture the sinless and the sinful meet and embrace, the holy and the no-longer-holy have their tryst.

How can the Holy One of God unite in personal union with sinful human nature, and remain Himself untainted? How can He who is innately righteous dwell in personal oneness with that which is in itself unrighteous, and remain Himself unsullied? This is a problem that no theology has been able to answer without recourse to mystery. And so, we may be sure, it will remain — as long as we bide in this bourne of time and place. Theology has sought the solution to this problem, has sought it in several directions; but the search goes on.

We shall in this article pay due attention to one of the solutions of the problem of the incarnation, the solution that has come to be called "the Anabaptist view." And because insight into theology is impossible without knowledge of history we shall sit in the company of the historic record, allowing it to do part of the talking.

THE Anabaptist view is the view that seeks to solve our problem by saying that Jesus did not take His human nature from Mary but brought it with Him from heaven. This new humanity that He brought with Him was said to be similar to ours but not identical with it. He did not take it from Mary; He only carried it through her.

This Anabaptist view found no favor in the eyes of the Reformers. Not because they had an explanation that had no residual mystery, for it is present in their particular view quite as certainly. Both must resort to the concept of imputation, of "thinking across," of a "mental fiction," whereby the righteousness of the One becomes the righteousness of the other, and the sin of the one becomes the sin of the Other. But, as we said, the Reformers rejected this Anabaptist view. The Belgian Con-

fession, accordingly, takes position against "the heresy of the Anabaptists who deny that Christ assumed human flesh of His mother" (Art. 18). So does the Compendium on which we were reared: "Did he then bring his human nature with him from heaven? No, but he took it upon himself from the virgin Mary."

Two questions come up, and for the answers to these we shall have to resort to the historic record. The questions are: Why and how did the Anabaptist solution come into being? and, to what extent was this solution a part of authentic Anabaptism?

THE so-called Anabaptist view derives almost completely from two men in the Anabaptist camp. It was broached by Melchior Hoffmann and appropriated from him by Menno Simons. But why? What were the drives that led these men to seek a solution in yet another direction?

Various explanations have been offered. One of these, an old one, is that Anabaptism was led to this view by its alleged dualism. Anabaptism, so it is said, thought in terms of a deep and pronounced discontinuity between nature and grace, and its peculiar solution derived from this emphasis upon discontinuity between Christ and the creatural order.

We shall not at this time discuss at length the question as to whether this dualism-approach does actually lead to the heart of Anabaptism — except to say that modern research has unearthed much more likely keys to the understanding of this movement. The chief of these is the Anabaptist repudiation of Constantinianism.

The Reformation itself *began* with such a repudiation. At the outset it rejected Constantinianism, that deformed version of Christianity that had prevailed in western Europe since the days of Constantine, that version of Christianity that dealt with every man as being in the same category with every other man, that Christianity which construed the Church and the Empire to be coextensive entities. The Reformation *ended* with a return to the ancient formula. It was not yet ten years old when neo-Constantinianism began to put in its appearance. And Anabaptism was at heart a rebellion against this neo-Constantinianism.

It was very central in the Anabaptist vision that

there is a pronounced and radical discontinuity between "man" and "Christian man." And it was the very nerve of the Anabaptist critique of the Reformers that in the order of things which these Reformers were creating, this discontinuity was being slighted and all but slurred over. The Reformers, they charged, had a communion table to which the entire populace had access; and they had a baptism that asked no questions. This gave the Anabaptists pain and deep distress; for in this state of affairs the discontinuity—which had been obscured all through medieval times—was again being lost to sight.

It was in this anguish of soul that Anabaptism was born, also the Anabaptist view of the incarnation propounded by Melchior Hoffmann and Menno Simons. For, said Menno, if there is discontinuity between "the body of Lord" (a favorite designation among Anabaptists for the Church of Christ) and "mere man," then must we not posit a discontinuity between the Head of that body and mere humanity? And that spells out the Anabaptist view so-called.

A surprising thing it is that although the insistence upon discontinuity was of the essence of Anabaptism as such,¹ yet the view of the incarnation which, in the case of Menno and a few others, came out of this insistence, was by no means accepted by Anabaptists in general. Of this we had agreed to speak also.

The so-called Anabaptist view was by no means coextensive with Anabaptism. It is not very far wrong to say that it was largely confined to the Anabaptism of the Low Countries. And even there large sections of Anabaptism never embraced the Hoffmann solution—the "Waterlanders" for instance. The same is true of many other subdivisions of Anabaptism.²

Instead of giving lists of names we shall transcribe from the record to show that many Anabaptists remained away from this view.

We give the testimony of Ambrosius Spitelmeier, for example, who stated his position in 1527. This man had been accused of "holding that Christ was a mere prophet and not true God and man." His reply was: "We hold and believe that Christ was a real and genuine man while on earth, exactly as we are, with flesh and blood, the son of Mary as to his humanity, for it was from her that

he took on flesh and blood; and yet he was not like unto us in that he was virgin born. And so as to his humanity he was the son of Mary . . . but as to his deity he was the natural son of God, born in the heart of the Father in all eternity, as John I has it. . . . In another connection this Spitelmeier said, "Mary was merely the means unto the humanity of Christ; for it was from her that he took his flesh and blood."

Nor was Spitelmeier a lone figure in his non-espousal of the Anabaptist solution. We shall quote from the confession of faith which an incarcerated Anabaptist wrote in the jail at Regensburg, toward the year 1540. This man, after reciting the orthodox delineation of the deity of Christ, wrote: "As to the other aspect, which he did in time take on from the virgin Mary . . . we say with divine truth that this man Jesus Christ, as to this aspect, was the true and natural son of the woman, the one whom God had promised to Eve on the outset . . . the true seed of Abraham in whom all the gentiles were to be healed . . . the blessed fruit of the womb of Mary. . . ."

This is certainly not "the view." And yet this man was the spokesman for Anabaptism as it was known in the Regensburg vicinity. But, let us hear this man out: "So that you may know why we speak so discriminately of the Christ . . . the many errors that becloud the simple confession of Christ constrain us to it. For we reject with fervor all who represent it . . . as though the Word did not actually assume our flesh but carried with him from heaven a strange heavenly flesh into Mary, so making Christ both as to the body and as to the spirit heavenly—what error flows from this view we give every right-hearted person to ponder, that then all the office, the activity, the suffering and the death of Christ were naught but fantasy and show . . . there then would be little of comfort, nay none at all, unto the healing of all that is carnal. . . ."

When we read all this we begin to understand that Adrian van Haemstede, one of the noblest of the noble native sons of the Reformation in Flanders and a minister in the Reformed Church of the Refugees in London, was led to say that "the Anabaptists are weaker brethren in Christ" and "when they die at the stake it is for the cause of the Gospel that they are made to die."

FORTUNATELY a successful Christmas does not depend upon an exact-science solution of the problem of the incarnation. Perhaps it is the divine intent that we shall stand in awe at, rather than understand fully, that mystery which Menno Simons insisted was and would remain *een groote verholentheyd*, a great mystery, in the presence of which we can only worship and adore.

1. If rebellion against the monism of Constantinianism, old as well as new, is rightly called dualism then, of course, Anabaptism was inherently dualistic. All through medieval times the charge of dualism was hurled at all who attacked the everybody-embracing church. But in the typical case, dualism in any Manichean sense was demonstrably absent.

2. For a summary of Anabaptism not committed to "the Anabaptist view" cf. Vos, *Menno Simons*.

Inspiration and the Facts of Scripture

by Lewis B. Smedes

IF our discussions about the inspiration of the Bible are to be fruitful, we shall have to come to an understanding on the question of method. The question of method comes down to this: how may we properly go about seeking an answer to the questions concerning the inspiration of the Bible that have recently disquieted us? I have recently suggested that the proper method is the one which allows all the data of Scripture to enlighten us on the nature of inspiration. I called this the "inductive method." One of the crucial issues in the entire discussion is whether this method is permissible or whether it is not.

My purpose in this article is (1) to explain what I mean by the inductive method, (2) to show that the inductive method has been used by Reformed theologians to determine one aspect of inspiration on which we all agree, and (3) to urge that the inductive method is a good and necessary way of determining the nature of inspiration in respect to the inerrancy of the Bible.

IN trying to make clear what I mean by the inductive method, I shall not be making a case for the use of the phrase. If another expression suits the matter better, I shall be glad to drop this one.

First, let me say that I do *not* mean by the term "inductive" to suggest a neutral attitude that withholds *all* judgment until all the facts are in. That is, I do not argue that we should search all the facts before acknowledging the authority, the divine origin and inspiration of the Bible, and the infallibility of its teachings. Such scientific objectivity with respect to the Bible is impossible. Either we read and believe the Bible, or we read and refuse to believe it. Either we hear and obey the Bible, or we hear and refuse to obey it. The Word of God comes with a total claim on our most basic allegiance, on our very existence, on our inmost soul. To use the inductive method to determine whether or not the Word of God is worthy of being believed and obeyed is already to disbelieve and disobey. In view of this, I clearly do not mean to argue that the inductive method is a legitimate way to determine whether we shall or shall not bow in faith and obedience before the Word of God.

I do, however, argue for the use of the inductive method within a specific context. I assume a context of faith, of commitment to the authority of the Word. I assume that we all are ready to accept whatever the Bible teaches about how it was

written. We all understand that the Bible teaches that its writers were attended by a constant supernatural guidance called inspiration. We are not all agreed, however, as to the precise effect that this divine inspiration produced. We are not agreed, that is, as to whether the Spirit's inspiration resulted in a body of writings that is *necessarily* without any inaccuracies in any of its details. When I urge the inductive method as a proper way of carrying on our studies on this point, I am simply urging that all the data of Scripture be brought to bear on the problem. We may have our own idea of what a divinely inspired book must be like. But we shall do justice to the inspiration of the Bible only if we allow all that the Bible presents to us for our observation and reflection, to tell us what kind of book the Bible is.

MY second purpose, as I said, is to show that this has indeed been the method used by Reformed theologians in arriving at one important qualification of the term "inspiration." I refer to the idea of organic inspiration. The somewhat obscure phrase "organic inspiration" is meant to characterize the *manner* in which divine inspiration took place. It is intended to indicate that the writers of Scripture were themselves organically involved in their writing. This means that the human personality of the individual writers was wholly involved and fully employed when they wrote under divine inspiration. The view that inspiration did not nullify, but rather made use of the human personality of the writers is distinguished from a view that is often called the dictation theory. The so-called dictation theory suggests that the Spirit of God inspired the words of Scripture much as an executive dictates a letter to his secretary. As a secretary does not actually compose, but only transcribes, so the writers of the Bible, according to the dictation theory, did not themselves really compose what they wrote, but only transcribed the words given by the Spirit.

How did Reformed students of the Bible come to the conclusion that the Bible was inspired organically rather than by dictation? Did they deduce this from the Bible texts which tell us that the writings were God-breathed? Hardly, for these texts by themselves could imply the dictation theory as well as the organic theory. Reformed theologians arrived at the organic inspiration theory after a study of *the data of the inspired Scriptures*. Hav-

ing observed the data, the phenomena of Scripture, they were obliged to reject the notion that the writers of Scripture were mere secretaries to the Spirit.

At the risk of belaboring the obvious, I shall note a few examples of the data that led them to the theory of organic inspiration. The first of these was the fact that each writer's own personality is revealed in his style. Peter has a different style from that of Paul. Each Evangelist writes differently from the others. Some writers have elegance about their writing, some are satisfied with homely, even crude styles. Some are rich in metaphor, some are flatly prosaic. Some are subtle, some are blunt. Some are terse, some are verbose. The style is the man, and in each style the human personality of the Biblical writer is revealed. This fact is not revealed in the texts that tell us the writings were all inspired. The writings themselves reveal it. Style is one of the data which force us to qualify the word "inspiration" with the adjective "organic."

The data of Scripture further reveal that the writers of Scripture do not use exact scientific language in speaking about nature. When the writer of Genesis 1 calls the moon a light, one of the two great celestial lights, we conclude that he was describing things, not as they precisely were, but as he observed them. When the writer of Genesis 7:11 tells us that the windows of heaven were opened to let the water come down, we conclude that he was only using an antiquated concept of rainfall, or was speaking poetically. When we are told in Joshua that the sun stood still, we conclude that the writer does not mean to tell us that the sun really stood still, but that somehow the light of day was miraculously prolonged.

Why do we feel free to draw these conclusions? We do so because we know that the moon is not strictly speaking a light, that there are no windows in the sky, and that the sun does not travel around the earth. The data of Scripture do not conform in these and other instances to our scientific understanding of things. Thus, we conclude from the data that the writers, though divinely inspired, did not use language that describes things with scientific accuracy. Again, then, the data of Scripture are allowed to determine what is and what is not involved in divine inspiration.

My final example is taken from the inspired writing of Biblical history. Being divinely inspired, the writers give a true account of the history they record. But what is a true account? If a true account of history is an account which meets the requirements of modern historical writing, requirements which include an exact recording of the sequence of events and a literally precise quota-

tion of sources, it is questionable whether the Bible meets the test. The data show that the Biblical writers do not follow these rules. They are sometimes indifferent about recording the exact sequence in which events took place (compare Matthew 26:26 and Luke 21:14). They do not always quote the words of Jesus with strict accuracy (compare Matthew 9:6 and Mark 2:9; Mark 10:17 and Matthew 19:17; Mark 6:8 and Matthew 10:9). The New Testament writers do not always quote Old Testament prophets with literal accuracy. These facts are well known. Our view of inspiration takes them into account. We say that the Spirit allowed the writers to relate the events of Christ's life in the sequence that best suited their purposes and to quote the words of our Lord and of the prophets freely as suited their ends. What led us to say this? The data of Scripture led us to say it, and in doing so to qualify the nature of divine inspiration.

The examples I have been citing are but a few of many Biblical data which are taken into account when we define the workings of inspiration. When we use such data as these, we are following the inductive method. Moreover, we follow it gladly. No one feels that the theory of organic inspiration, to which the data of Scripture have led us, is a weakening of the authority of the Word of God. We feel that it enriches rather than impoverishes our understanding of inspiration. Who would prefer that the Holy Spirit nullified the human personality of the Biblical writer? Who would want to go back to a dictation theory of inspiration? But it is important to remember that it was the inductive study of all the data of Scripture which led us to the theory of organic inspiration.

WE now must ask whether the inductive study of the data of Scripture may also influence our thinking about inspiration in the question of inerrancy. If it is proper to qualify inspiration as organic because the data of Scripture requires it, why is it not proper to qualify inspiration in regard to inerrancy should the data of Scripture require it? Such qualification would be proper in the first case and improper in the second case only if the explicit teaching of Scripture about its inspiration did *not* settle the matter in the first case and *did* settle the matter in the second case. That is, if the teaching of the Bible on inspiration explicitly teaches that no inaccuracies or discrepancies of any sort are possible in any detail of Scripture, we shall have to rule out the inductive method on this point. I shall be dogmatic here and simply assert that its teaching respecting this matter is not explicit. It is no more

explicit on the matter of inerrancy than it is on the matter of organic inspiration.

The theory that no inaccuracies are possible within an inspired Scripture is a *deduction* from the phrase "God-breathed." It may be on the face of it a reasonable deduction, but it is not explicitly taught. A reasonable deduction from a teaching may properly be accepted, but only with reservations until the data involved are also allowed to shed their light. We may perhaps feel that a divinely inspired book, from the nature of the case, must be accurate in every detail. But the Scriptures themselves and *not what we feel the Scriptures must be* must decide the issue. It was also felt at one time by many that inspired writings had to be dictated writings. The facts of Scripture, however, prevailed over man's feelings in this instance. Whether the facts will in the end prevail over what many feel to be necessary in the case of inerrancy is not now the point. But it is the point to insist that the data be allowed to say what they have to say.

We are not the first to suggest that our view of inerrancy must be determined in the same way that our theory of organic inspiration was determined. Charles Hodge writes: "*Our views of inspiration must be determined by the phenomena* (that is, the data) *of the Bible as well as from its didactic statements.* If in fact the sacred writers retain each his own style and mode of thought, then we must renounce any theory which assumes that inspiration obliterates or suppresses all individual peculiarities. If the Scriptures abound in contradictions and errors, then it is vain to contend that they were written under an influence which precludes all error. The question, therefore, is a question of fact" (Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, I, 169). Hodge assumes that what is the right method in one instance is the right method in the other. He was confident, as we are, that the facts of Scripture would stand up wonderfully well under this kind of study. But he was also eager to insist that an unresolved discrepancy on a matter of detail does not upset the reality of inspiration.

I have been insisting that the data of Scripture have a rightful role to play in our discussions concerning the inerrancy of Scripture. This is perhaps the place to provide a few examples of the type of data that are involved. They are not a new discovery; they are well known to everyone who has considered the problem. The question at issue is the role that such data as these are to be allowed to play. Here are a few examples of the data I have in mind. II Samuel 24 gives a different number of men counted in Israel and Judah by David than I

Chronicles 21 gives. Matthew 20 has a different number of blind men healed by our Lord on one occasion than Mark 10 has. Matthew tells us that Judas hanged himself while Luke, in Acts 1, tells us that Judas fell and tore apart his inwards. Matthew and Mark disagree with Luke on whether Jairus' daughter was dead on Jesus' arrival at Jairus' house. Finally, there are disagreements as to the exact sequence of events at the time of our Lord's resurrection.

It will be noted that not a single doctrine or truth of any narrative hangs on these details. Yet they are part of the data of Scripture. These, too, must be taken into consideration when the nature of inspiration is defined. They are as much a part of the data of Scripture as is the difference in styles among the writers. We need fear them or cover them no more than we need fear or cover any other phenomena of the Bible.

Great care must, of course, be exercised. But the steps in our study are not obscure, though the path is studded with difficulties. The steps are these. First, we must consider whether the apparent discrepancies can be reasonably reconciled. Sober and prayerful judgment must guide us in determining whether any reconciliation is reasonable or whether it is forced and fanciful. If they or any of them cannot be reasonably reconciled, we must ask whether they are the result of errors made by the men who copied the manuscripts. This is a difficult question to answer at times and one not always productive of absolutely certain results. But we utilize the fruits of such textual study constantly and gratefully. If it should turn out that the apparent discrepancies cannot be resolved in either of these ways, we shall accept them tentatively as they stand. And we shall then have to qualify our understanding of the nature of inspiration in the light of them.

I HAVE outlined briefly what seems to me a right method of carrying on our discussions about inspiration. As I said at the beginning, our discussion will not be fruitful until we come to an agreement that this is or is not a proper method. The inductive method may perhaps lead us where we in our fears prefer not to go. But the Reformed mind has never been motivated in its study of the Word of God by fear. Nor has it tried to determine for itself what kind of book the Bible must be. It has been confident that the Word of God will never lose its genuine authority over our lives as long as we let it, in all that it says and all that it is, be the one criterion for our thinking and acting. The whole Bible must be the criterion for our thinking about inspiration as well as our thinking about every other article of our Christian faith.

The Mystery of Christ and the Ecumenical Movement

by Harry R. Boer

WHEN we study the biographies of great men, we soon discover that most of them went through periods of development in which certain emphases, stages of growth, points of view, were characteristic. The period changed, became enriched and grew into a higher, broader stage until in the maturing flower of final development all that was the man's richest and best in the past blended into the abiding contribution of life and work.

The Search for Lost Unity

It is so with the church of Jesus Christ. She has her stages of development, her great movements and cycles of growth and deepening realization of the truth. The world church at present finds herself, it seems to me, at the beginning of a new stage in her history. It is the stage that may be characterized as the search for lost unity. Nearly everywhere the emphasis is on arresting and putting into reverse the process of ecclesiastical fragmentation. This is the great, the inescapable fact of life of the church today. It was long in crystallizing, has a massiveness and depth corresponding to the graduality of its growth, and promises to be a determinative fact in the history of the church for many years to come.

This historical stage of searching for lost unity must not be simply identified with the ecumenical movement as it comes to expression in the World Council of Churches. The WCC is a particular manifestation of the search for lost unity; it does not exhaust it. The search goes on in many places that bear no direct or even an indirect relationship to the WCC. The ecumenical *movement* is a broad movement whose deepest roots lie in the Holy Spirit, who desires that His church be one and not broken, and who is in these days moving mightily to restore the unity that has been lost. It is *His* movement I have in mind when I speak about the ecumenical movement.

From 1500 to 1900 the chief concern of the church was with formulating the deposit of truth entrusted to her in Scripture. The overriding concern of the church in these four centuries was with doctrine, central and more peripheral. The endeavor was to bring the scriptural deposit to more or less systematic expression in terms of overarching or dominant motifs. The massive work of the theologians of the forepart of the period was given

creedal expression in the great creeds of which the last was the Westminster Confession (1648). In the remaining part of the period, theological reflection involved mainly a deepening and elaboration of the basic teachings laid down in the creeds.

The Derailement

As the years wore on, however, something went badly wrong somewhere. The concern for doctrinal truth was not accompanied by an equal concern for *the church*, with the result that any prophet of a new doctrine who could get a following made himself the founder of a "church," always, of course, in the interest of "the truth," that is, of a particular doctrine. In the second place, developments in the sciences and in philosophy began sharply to affect the life of the church. It soon discovered in its midst theologians who denied the divine authority of scripture and therefore the supernatural character of its message.

It is small wonder that in this climate the church began to lose her essential character as a mystery. At the heart of the New Testament "mystery of Christ" lies the unity of the church, and the mystery is not a static one but a growing one. Everywhere it must eat into areas of unbelief and make them subject to Christ. On the one hand, the church in her massiveness and unity could hardly be seen for all the denominations, and on the other hand, missions did not arise seriously in the Protestant wing of the church until 1800. Even then they were undertaken not by the church as such but by societies of Christians, often over the open opposition of the church. In short, the concern of the church to be orthodox and doctrinal unaccompanied by the desire above all to be *herself*, that is, to be *the church*, ran into a dead end.

As has already been intimated, this article wishes to be a continuation of the discussion begun in the October issue on the mystery of Christ. This mystery, we saw, is the church in her unity, in her fellowship of Jew and gentile, in her union with Christ, in the activity of the proclamation to the ends of the earth in the end-time, in her cosmic significance, and in her destiny of glory. Not any one of these aspects is the mystery, nor all together in their sum, but all of them in their relationships to each other, creating that one har-

monious entity called the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the mystery of Christ.

This church is a mystery in the Pauline sense of the word. It is revealed, stands openly and obviously before us, we are members of it, share in its life, yet it is withal a mysterious mystery. The gates of hell attack it but cannot prevail against it; it survives all vicissitudes, internal no less than external. It is apprehended by believers but is not comprehended by them. In the eyes of the world this fellowship which moves at the center of all history is a thing weak and despised, foolish, yet very much of an obstruction to the world's aims and therefore a thing to be destroyed. Yet in the end the fellowship is found to be the destruction of the destroyer.

The central meaning of the ecumenical movement is, it seems to me, that it is a massive concern to fix the attention of the church upon, and to place centrally before the world, this mystery of its being. There is today in the church a reflection upon and preoccupation with the nature of the church's being such as history has not previously seen. What was self-evident before the Reformation, and what for Rome has always been self-evident — though hardly in the New Testament sense of the word — the Protestant wing of the church must painfully, after long derailment, regain.

The New Standard

At this point it is necessary to make an observation that is central to this and subsequent articles on the mystery of Christ. It is this: so long as we consider the church's traditional concern with doctrine, divorced from equal concern for the unity of the church, as her highest duty; so long as we consider the church as a receptacle of, rather than a channel for, the truth, we shall not in the nature of the case be able to understand the ecumenical spirit operative in so many places in the church today. So long as we retain the old point of view, the ecumenical movement must inevitably be regarded as a movement born of indifference to the truth since it seeks to create fellowship between traditional theological and ecclesiastical incompatibles. To do this, however, is to be grossly unfair to the ecumenical movement. It has a genius, a scriptural point of departure, and therefore a spiritual power of its own, and it is by these that it must be judged.

When the Christian church in the course of her concern with doctrine was being broken into countless fragments, we did not condemn the doctrinal concern (nor do we do so now) as "schismatic." We simply deplored its unhappy by-products. So also we have no right to condemn the ecumenical movement as "monolithic," "liberal," or "doctri-

nally indifferent," simply because there are a number of people speaking for it who might like to create an ecclesiastical monolith, or who are liberal, or who are doctrinally indifferent. In other words, the emergence of the ecumenical movement means the rise of a new standard of what is central in the life of the church. This concern is *the integrity of her own being*. This new concern does not deny doctrinal interest. It puts it in a proper perspective of concern for the fellowship and unity of the church. When doctrine is so viewed it will be found, as in the theological reflection of St. Paul, to be concrete, that it does not tend to separate true followers of Christ from each other, and above all that it remains geared to the God-given calling of the church to seek not herself but a lost world and to retain the unity of the Spirit in order to do this.

We may not, therefore, apply to the ecumenical movement the standard for the central value of the church's life that obtained from 1500 to 1900. To do so is like comparing an oak with a maple to determine its reality and integrity as a tree. The oak has its own nature and that nature cannot be judged by another tree, but must be judged by the larger idea of what a tree is as God has revealed this in creation. So we must in evaluating the ecumenical movement bring to bear on it the judgment of the word of God as the final arbiter of what is and what is not valid in His kingdom. When we apply this standard to the period 1500-1900, that period in the history of the church is not found to be quite so beautiful as many think it is; and when we apply it to the ecumenical movement, that movement is found to be not the child of doctrinal indifferentism and monolithic aspirations, but rather a God-given realization that Christ's body is not a disjointed collection of members which have a unity in some never seen spiritual realm, but that it is a unity which is supposed to be *so* visible that even *unbelieving men* must be able to see it and so be drawn to Christ (John 1:22, 23).

The Mystery of Christ and the Unity of the Church

Perhaps the most central characteristic of the mystery of Christ is the idea of the unity of the church. There is one olive tree consisting of Jewish and gentile branches, there is one faith to be proclaimed, one baptism to be administered, one fellowship whose unity exists horizontally among her members and vertically between the church and her head, and all of this is symbolized in the marriage relationship between Christ as bridegroom and the church as bride.

This emphasis in the New Testament the church and her theologians knew from 1500 to 1900 as well as we know it today. But so strong was the hold which the finality of doctrine alone had on them as

the standard for evaluating the integrity of the church that the scriptural teaching of the visible unity of the church was explained away by a theological invention lacking all scriptural validity or, rather, with a theological invention which destroyed beyond all recognition the New Testament idea of the unity of the church. The unity of the church, it was held, is a *spiritual* unity *in the sense* that this spiritual unity exhausts all that is truly essential in the unity of the church. That is to say, the scriptural demand for the unity of the church is in all essentials met when we affirm and believe in the spiritual unity of believers, in their unity in Christ *without* this unity-in-Christ coming to visible and historical institutional and communal expression. That is the kind of unity that the period of orthodoxy from 1500 to 1900 believed in.

It was, of course, admitted that it was unfortunate that Christians could not be visibly as well as spiritually one, and the expectation that this unity would be realized in the world to come was deep and sincere. The absence of visible unity did not, however, do any real despite to the true unity of the church here and now, and there were consequently few bad theological consciences in presenting to the world our many churches as an adequate representation of Christ's one church. Somehow or other the church was regarded as "one" even though Christians from different communions could not sit at the same Lord's table.

enjoy the same ministry, or possibly recognize each other as true members of the church of Christ. This is the kind of "unity" we have lived with too long, a unity that preaches concrete here-and-now fellowship in every area of life from picnics to politics, but *not* in the church of Jesus Christ where true fellowship is supposed to find its highest expression. This is the kind of unity with which the ecumenical movement has taken issue, and on scriptural grounds. This is the kind of unity the integrity and validity of which the Holy Spirit is now challenging through the frailty of the very instrument that has so long denied the fullness of the unity which He Himself created at Pentecost, namely, the church.

The mystery of Christ as Paul sets it forth is a wonderfully refreshing conception. It believes in the unity of the church, in the missionary outreach of the church, and in her glorious destiny trailing cosmic changes in her wake. It requires the church of our day to purify herself of the scripturally impure idea that she has held about the purity of doctrine that disregarded the purity of the scriptural idea of the church, and invites her to integrate all that was good in the doctrinal concern in the building of a new point of departure for her theological thinking, namely, *the church*, the body of Christ, in which believers shall fellowship and which unbelievers can see as a here-and-now communion of God's people.

The Distortion of Denominational Ideals: Legalism

by Simon J. De Vries

LEGALISM is the absolutization of law. In Jewish legalism conformity to the Torah became the all-in-all of religion. Judaism was far more concerned with carrying out an external code than with finding the secret of how to be well-pleasing in one's heart to the Divine Person from whom that code had come. It succumbed to a dangerous and idolatrous distortion.

Obedience to the Law of God is, of course, a true Christian ideal, but Christianity has restored the Law to its proper place. It is neither the first nor the last concern for the Christian believer. The Law is not supremely authoritative in itself, but derives its authority from the God who gave it. As Paul says, "The law is good, and the command-

ment holy, and righteous, and good" (Rom. 7:12), but not when they are absolutized. The Law is not the goal, but only the guide of morality. The driving force of genuine Christian morality is the desire to show God one's gratitude for redemption and to become more and more conformed to the image of Christ; the Law helps in this, and hence the Christian takes it seriously. It comes from the God whom he loves, and indicates some of the ways in which that God may be pleased by His servants, but the believer knows that the Law may never be allowed to become an end in itself.

The New Testament makes this matter indisputably clear. When the Judaizers wanted to shackle the church anew with the tyranny of legalism, Paul

called their attempt a dreadful apostasy, the very betrayal of the gospel (Gal. 2:21). He cries out in alarm, "For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1); "Ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15); "Ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). Yet Paul lays the believer under the yoke of Christ. If a Christian does not keep the Law out of slavish dread, he does try to keep it out of filial love. He is under debt to the grace of God: "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another" (Gal. 5:13); "Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (I Cor. 6:19, 20).

This is the real meaning of "the great commandment" and of the "second like unto it." We call these commandments the Summary of the Law, but they actually represent something entirely different from any external code of conduct. Loving God and our neighbor is not a perfunctory outward act. It requires the concentration of all our energies in the service and worship of God. If we could only love perfectly there would not have to be any other rules. Perfect love automatically fulfills all that is required.

It is only because we as sinners do not love God and our neighbor with perfect selfless devotion that we need an external code of law. We need this to remind us of our failure, and we need it to spur us on to greater effort. Yet the Law would be meaningless to us, even in this imperfect state, if we were not impelled by the love which God has created in our hearts, for where love is absent, all rules are useless and impotent.

The difference between the legalistic and the evangelical use of the Law is clear. It lies not so much in one's performance as in his motivation. The Christian observes the Law out of love; the legalist obeys it out of fear or out of self-esteem or out of the desire for community approval. The Christian aims to honor the God behind the Law while the legalist is concerned most of all with the external code.

ONE would think that such plain and positive teaching as appears in the New Testament would prevent the Christian church from ever again falling into the ways of legalism, but in fact many have succumbed to its temptation. While the antinomians and libertines have carried Paul's defense of Christian liberty far beyond the bound that he had set for it, other groups in Christendom have fallen into a new kind of work-righteousness

and moralism. Roman Catholicism has been an enigma. While allowing astonishing laxity in the keeping of the great Moral Law of the Bible, it has developed a vast new system of prescriptions and proscriptions for the observance of its cult. Whether the new legalism of the Roman Catholic Church is a great improvement over the old legalism of the Jews is doubtful. Rome has lost much of the gospel which the New Testament church rescued from Judaism, so that its failure is a double sin.

Within the Protestant movement the Anabaptistic and sectarian groups have generally tended to be legalistic in their morality. By way of English Puritanism and through other influences the legalistic spirit has become particularly strong in certain elements of Dutch Calvinism. Our fathers brought much of it with them when they immigrated to this land.

Because he was so somber in his own personal morality and imposed so stern a regimen upon the citizens of Geneva, John Calvin has been accused of fathering Puritan legalism. This is, however, an oversimplification. It is true that he had a serious temperament. It is also true that he did not hesitate to use his influence in drawing the moral reins upon a notoriously licentious city. But it should be made clear that he did this purely out of devotion to Christ. Here again we must remember that motivation, not performance, marks the real difference between legalism and New Testament morality.

Anyone who doubts that Calvin understood the difference between these two should do the Reformer the justice of reading the chapter "On Christian Liberty" in his *Institutes* (III, xix). What Calvin writes there is of great importance. After discussing some of the problems involved, he lays down three essential principles:

The first part is, that the conscience of believers, when seeking an assurance of their justification before God, should raise themselves above the law, and forget all the righteousness of the law. The second part of Christian liberty . . . is, that their consciences do not observe the law, as being under any legal obligation; but that, being liberated from the yoke of the law, they yield a voluntary obedience to the will of God. The third part of Christian liberty teaches us, that we are bound by no obligation before God respecting external things, which in themselves are indifferent; but that we may indifferently sometimes use, and at other times omit them.

In support of this third point Calvin cites I Timothy 4:4, 5 and Romans 14:14. The latter reads, "I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself."

Calvin goes on in this chapter to warn against showing off one's Christian liberty, pointing out

that even though we are free from legalistic prohibitions, it is required that we leave certain things undone if they cause a weaker brother to stumble (Rom. 14). Nevertheless, Calvin stubbornly refuses to yield to Pharisaism. He says, "I approve of the common distinction between an offence given and an offence taken," recalling how Paul circumcised Timothy in order not to offend the weak of conscience, but refused to do the same with Titus when the Judaizers demanded this of him.

IT seems hardly necessary for me to elaborate evidence that the spirit of legalism is a constant danger among us. Most will readily agree that legalism is a habit of thinking that dominates many of our practices. In the complexities of modern life, we are constantly tempted to resort to a set of external rules for the regulation of Christian morality. The worst of it is that we are often not satisfied with governing our own personal conduct by such rules but want to impose them on everyone else in the church, and (if this be possible, as sometimes it is) on the community in which we reside. This is legalism with a vengeance. Our whole religious communion is placed thereby in the crucible of conformism. All are judged by one external standard. If we have observed that standard ourselves, we pride ourselves on our piety; if our fellow Christian fails to keep it, he is condemned. Sometimes there seems to be very little room for Christian liberty in the New Testament sense, as Calvin explained it. We constantly overlook the warning of Romans 14:4, "Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or falleth."

Now we all know that "walking humbly with our God" is not an easy matter. Nor is it simple to obey Paul's precept to stand fast on our freedom in Christ while using that freedom not to please ourselves but to serve God and one another (Gal. 5:1, 13). A simple way is to throw morality overboard completely. Another is to reduce morality to a rigid formula of external precepts. Libertinism takes the one alternative; legalism takes the other; both of them are equally lazy about that true piety which God desires. The libertine says, "I'll go to any show I please; what's the difference?" The legalist says, "The motion picture machine is a creation of hell; no movie could possibly be permissible for a Christian." The libertine sees no wrong in using the Lord's Day for the most mundane pleasures — or even forgets about worshipping God entirely. The legalist sees nothing right in any pleasure on his Sabbath; the old-fashioned type used to make it a day of complete gloom.

In the year 1928 our Christian Reformed Synod seemed to come very close to falling into the error

of legalism as it set forth its specifications concerning worldliness. It issued a stern warning against card playing, theatrical productions, and dancing. Many thought that our denomination had absolutely condemned these three forms of amusement, and so prevalent had this opinion become that the Synod of 1951 felt it necessary to issue a clarification. This Synod made clear that our church does not want to fall into legalism by outright condemnation of practices in which there may be some good. What the church has condemned is the *worldliness* to be found in many modern amusements, not the amusements as such.

In doing this the church is on safe Scriptural ground, since the Bible clearly condemns worldliness, and none of us would deny that much worldliness is to be found in the field of amusements. But Christian liberty must be preserved. The believer must be warned, and his Spirit-led conscience must guide him in concrete decisions.

This seems over-subtle to simplistic minds. The cry goes up, How can we enforce such a rule? (So also the cry, How can consistories enforce the new decision about divorce?) This is the voice of legalism, demanding rules. The church, however, is utterly dependent upon the Word and Spirit of Christ for the inculcation of genuine morality. There is a place for rules, of course, but they are to be used against practices which the New Testament plainly shows to be evil. There is a place for discipline, but it is to be employed with those who show that they have no love for Christ, not as a weapon for legalists who want to impose their view concerning doubtful things upon the rest of the religious community.

A CHRISTIAN is in earnest about observing the Law of God, but he avoids legalism like a deadly pestilence. He may often be perplexed about his moral duty. Life in this imperfect world is indeed complex. The good and the evil are often distressingly confused within each other. But this fact ought to be a warning against legalism and absolutism, not an excuse for them. One thing that can at any rate be very clear to us in the ambiguities of moral living is the essential difference between legalism and Christian morality: the latter is motivated by gratitude and love to God; the former comes either from the fear of community condemnation or from the desire for community approval. Basically this is a matter of obeying man or obeying God.

This, then, is our one sure test: Is what I am doing pleasing to God? If so, I need not fear man's disapproval. Is it displeasing to Him? Then, whatever people may say, and however I may try to excuse it, it is sin.

BOOK REVIEW

A SHORTER COMMENTARY ON ROMANS. By Karl Barth. Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1959. 188 pp., \$3.00.

Reviewed by JOHN WEIDENAAR, Associate Professor of Bible, Calvin College.

According to Barth, Romans is Paul's Gospel according to the Old Testament. A Jewish scribe who became a Christian missionary, Paul wrote the epistle as a preparation for his contemplated visit to Rome, expecting thereby to extend Christianity in the west. Romans is not primarily a catechism, nor a dogmatics, but rather a comprehensive statement of the Gospel.

What is the Gospel? It is a revelation, says Barth, a disclosure of something which otherwise would remain hidden. It is a revelation in the present tense because it does not stop taking place. When we hear the Gospel we are made a contemporary of it. The revelation in the Gospel is the revelation of God's righteousness, which is the just verdict of God the Judge. In the Gospel we see the judgment seat occupied by Him whom God has appointed to judge the world. This man, Jesus Christ, is the content of the Gospel. He is revealed in the Gospel and God's verdict is revealed in Him. The Announcer of God's verdict is at the same time the Completer of the almighty work of salvation. The Judge is the Savior.

In Barth's view, the first half of Romans is the Gospel of God as God's condemnation of man; as the divine justification of the man who believes; as man's reconciliation with God; as man's sanctification; as man's liberation; and as the establishment of God's law. The second half deals with the Gospel among the Jews, where it was disbelieved, and the Gospel among Christians, where it was believed. The epistle closes with personal communications, greetings, a warning against false teachers, and solemn praise to God revealed in the Gospel.

* * * *

Paul defines the Gospel as the power of God to save everyone that believes because in it is revealed the righteousness of God. Reading from 1:18 through 3:20 we learn from the majority of writers on Romans that Paul, in the section indicated, presents a demonstration of the world's desperate need of that Gospel which saves pre-

cisely because it reveals the righteousness of God. The Gentile world needs the Gospel because it is unrighteous and the Jewish world needs it because it is self-righteous. Instead of following this generally approved and accepted approach, Barth insists that 1:18—3:20 should be designated *The Gospel as God's Condemnation of Man*.

Obviously Barth does not mean that the Gospel is only condemnation, but he does assert with vigor that the arraignment of Gentiles (1:18-32) and Jews (2:1—3:20) beginning with the well-known clause, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven..." (1:18) is an integral part of the Gospel. Coming to 3:21—4:25 and looking back at 1:18—3:20 Barth declares:

For our salvation we are allowed and for our rich consolation we are bidden to submit to the divine condemnation. For it is the Gospel which reveals to us this wrath of God. This wrath of God is only the hard, bitter shell in which we have to receive God's judgment! For to those who do accept it, it is the omnipotent work of their salvation (1:16). Why that divine condemnation of man in 1:18—3:20, that accusation against each and everyone (3:9), that stopping of every mouth, that exposure of sin by the application of God's Law (3:20)?

Evidently Barth maintains that 1:18-32 (Gentiles) and 2:1—3:20 (Jews) do not refer to a second or even a first revelation distinct from the one mentioned in 1:17, which reads in part: "For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith..." The revelation of God's wrath as something apart from the revelation of the Gospel would mean that Paul has abandoned his office as messenger of the Gospel for a while in order to speak as a religious interpreter of the human situation or as a Christian philosopher of religion and history. Barth holds this to be impossible because there is no evidence for it in the beginning of Romans. Since Paul does not abandon the viewpoint of the Gospel when speaking of the Jews, why should he do so in Romans 1 when he

speaks of the Gentiles? The wrath revealed from heaven (1:18) is nothing else than the revelation of the wrath of God in the Gospel. It is only belief in the Gospel that will accept these statements concerning *the wrath of God*. The wrath revealed is the verdict of the faithful God on the whole world in Jesus Christ. To deny that the *revelation of the wrath of God from heaven* is the Gospel, is to attack Paul's educational method whereby he deals first with the harder and darker aspect before he can speak of the light side of revelation. The comfort of the Gospel is there too, but it is hidden in the testimony concerning God's condemnation of man in the Gospel.

It is clear that Barth's construction of the opening chapters of Romans has furnished him with a powerful weapon against the Roman Catholic dogma of natural theology as well as against the dogmas of liberal Protestantism. Barth identifies the wrath of God revealed from heaven (1:18) with the revelation in the Gospel. He seeks exegetical warrant for his position by referring to three "For's" in Romans 1:16, 17, and 18. Thus the Gospel is the *power* of God unto salvation, the revelation of the *righteousness* of God, and God's *condemnation* (wrath) upon man. When God and man meet in the preaching and hearing of the Gospel, the opposition between man and God appears. And it appears in this form: man is shown to be irreverent (ungodliness, 1:18) and insubordinate (unrighteousness, 1:18).

Since the wrath of God is revealed in the Gospel, it must not be misinterpreted as something foreign and contrary to God's love. God's love is a burning and consuming love. The revelation of God's wrath or of the death-sentence to which God has condemned man because of his sin, is the very act in which God did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all (8:32). The death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the revelation of God's wrath from heaven. This is the key to the interpretation of 1:18-32. Obviously, Barth's insistence upon limiting revelation to this solitary revelation in Christ in the Gospel makes it incumbent upon him to include both wrath and grace in the Gospel.

By this time the reader will recognize the fact that Barth's Christomonism, which means revelation only in Christ in the Gospel, has bearing not only

against Roman Catholicism and liberal Protestantism, but also the teaching of Article II of the Belgic Confession. For the sake of convenience we quote the relevant material in Romans 1:18-21:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse; because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened.

Barth is keenly aware of the fact that the above words have been cited to prove the existence of a "natural" knowledge of God by the Gentiles prior to and independent of God's revelation

in Jesus Christ. Barth rejects the view that the passage in question can be adduced as proof for a general doctrine of such a natural knowledge of God. He holds that these words occur in a context in Romans and in the whole body of Pauline literature (notably I Cor. 2:6-16) which forbids us from regarding the Gentiles as being in full participation and possession of a genuine knowledge of God. Says Barth:

If Paul really did reckon with such a possibility, why did he not use it to much better advantage? Why, in the whole remainder of the Epistle to the Romans and in all his other Epistles does he speak about the knowledge of God as if there were in reality but one knowledge of God, the one which is based on the revelation of that divine verdict and work of salvation and therefore on the revelation in Jesus Christ?

Barth is so preoccupied with the solitary revelation in the Gospel that he maintains that Paul in Romans 1:18-32 is speaking of the Gentiles as

they are now confronted with the Gospel, whether they know it or not, and whether they like it or not. They are confronted with the Gospel because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and because, since then, the proclamation of His name has been taking its course throughout the world. Paul sees the Gentiles in the reflected light of that fire of God's wrath which is the fire of His love. It took nothing less than an apostle to tell the Gentiles the greatest news concerning them, namely, that God has since the creation of the world been declaring and revealing Himself to them.

At this point the reader who accepts the teaching of the Belgic Confession that we know God by two means (by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, and by His holy and divine Word) may ask: Has Barth abandoned his notion of the exclusive revelation in Christ? He may wonder still more when he reads:

The world which has always been around them, has always been God's work and as such God's witness to himself. Objectively the Gentiles have always had the opportunity of knowing God, his invisible being, his eternal power and godhead. And again, objectively speaking, they have always known him. In all that they have known otherwise, God as the Creator of all things has always been, objectively speaking, the power and real object of their knowledge, exactly in the same sense as undoubtedly the Jews in their Law were objectively dealing with God's revelation (p. 28).

In the effort to get at Barth's notion of revelation and to determine specifically whether he wholly rejects General Revelation in favor of an exclusive revelation in Christ in the Gospel, we are compelled to reckon with the distinctions that appear in his presentation. On the one hand, an apostle must tell the Gentiles that God has since the creation of the world been declaring and revealing Himself to them; on the other hand, God *has been* revealing Himself to them! Barth describes this revelation of God to the Gentiles as objective knowledge, but he distinguishes between this objective knowledge and the response of the Gentiles to God's revelation. It is the revelation that renders the Gentiles without excuse, and it is their response to this revelation which makes them guilty and subject to the righteous wrath

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f God. Thus Barth, it would appear, recognizes both the *reality* and the *limitations* of General Revelation. (This recognition is not, it seems to me, con-
trolled out by Barth's assertion that there is no point of contact in the religion of the Gentiles for the proper understanding of the Gospel.)

It appears to me that a Biblical evaluation of General Revelation cannot fail to reckon with the limitations cited by Barth, for God's *saving* revelation is definitely Christomonistic.

It should be further observed that if one has first designated the epistle to the Romans as the Gospel according to Paul as he found it in the Old Testament and interpreted it in the light of the "divine-human encounter" on the road to Damascus, it is obvious that 1:18-32 is a part of the Gospel. It is then legitimate to hold that the demonstration of man's desperate need of the Gospel is an integral part of

the Gospel, for man must certainly be made aware of his need before he can accept the proffered Gospel. Genuine knowledge of sin and guilt is not obtained by rational reflection nor by the lesson of experience. Thus one cannot object to calling the Gospel God's condemnation of man. Barth is correct in holding that it is only belief in the Gospel that will accept these statements concerning God's wrath.

I find therefore in Barth gives which move in the direction of a reconsideration on his part of elements that must enter into our conception of General Revelation. I also accept his position that the Gospel can certainly be viewed as a necessary part of God's condemnation of man. For further elaboration on this matter I recommend the article by G. C. Berkouwer, "General and Special Revelation" in *Revelation and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958).

I confess, however, difficulty in accepting all of his interpretation of Romans 1:18-32. First, I do not find sufficient warrant for identifying the righteousness of 1:17 with the wrath revealed from heaven in 1:18-32. It seems to me that the righteousness revealed in the Gospel is clearly explicated by Paul, not in 1:18-32 but notably and clearly in Romans 3:21-30. In the second place, 1:24-32 can hardly be used to encompass both the shady and the light side of the Gospel as Barth appears to hold. If at any place in the Scriptures we have a description of the *reprobate* it is in Romans 1:24-32. And the reprobate as here described has reached the end of the road and the point of no return. It is to me highly significant that in this passage Paul does not even address the reprobate. He is no longer addressable. His fate is sealed and his doom is secure.

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Albert, Ekoko (May)
Bandstra, Andrew J. (Oct.)
Boer, Harry R. (Jan., Oct., Dec.)
Bokondo, M. (May)
Borst, P. (Mar.)
Bratt, John (Mar., Apr.)
Brouwer, Tony (Feb.)
Calvin, John (Feb., Mar., Apr., May, June)
Daane, James (Jan., Feb., Apr., Sept.)
Dalling, John T. (Feb., Mar.)
De Graaf, Clarence (Dec.)
De Jong, Peter (Feb.)
DeKoster, Lester (Jan., Apr., May, June, Jul.-Aug., Oct.)
De Kruyter, Arthur H. (Nov.)
De Rooy, Henry M. (June)
De Vries, Simon J. (Sept., Nov., Dec.)
Eppinga, Jacob D. (Nov.)
Gardner, R. F. R. (Jul.-Aug.)
Hoekstra, Peter (Apr., May)
Ilunga, N. (May)
Jabay, Earl (June)
Kabeva, N. (May)
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Kayulu, M. (May)
Kayembe, S. (May)
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Koops, Hugh A. (Feb., Oct., Dec.)
Kromminga, John H. (Sept.)
Mbilo, J. (May)
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Oppewal, Donald (Jan.)
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Smedes, Lewis B. (Jul.-Aug., Dec.)
Spaan, Howard B. (June)
Stob, Henry, (May, Jul.-Aug.)
Sweetman, Leonard Jr. (Jul.-Aug., Sept.)
Tiemersma, Richard R. (Nov.)
Timmer, John (Jul.-Aug.)
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Vanden Bosch, J. G. (May)
Vander Weele, Steve J. (Sept., Dec.)
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Verduin, Leonard (May, Jul.-Aug., Oct., Nov., Dec.)
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Sietsema, John H. (Jul.-Aug.)
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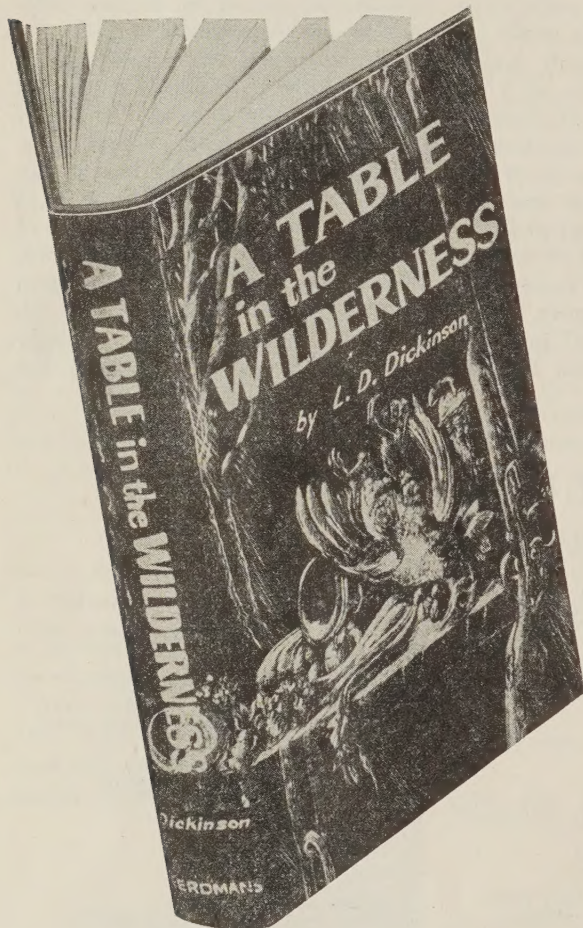
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